

Creeds and statements of faith

Isaiah 43:9-13

Over the last few weeks we have worked our way through the Apostle's Creed looking at this widely used creed.

Before Sarah finishes our series on the creeds next week, we thought we would take a moment to consider the creeds and statements of faith that are available to us. The word creed comes from the latin *credo* which means I believe and many of the statements of belief start with the words I believe, or We believe.

The Church of England formally recognises 3 different creeds and 7 different statements of faith – the Apostles Creed, the first versions of which date back to around a hundred years after Jesus' life and the Nicene Creed dating back to the 4th century which we have used in our services. The third creed, the creed of St Athanasius is a little more recent dating to the 5th or 6th century and is rarely used. Personally I rather like its methodical thorough statements but think from this extract you will probably understand why it's not used much in church...

For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son: and another of the Holy Ghost.

But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one: the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal.

Such as the Father is, such is the Son: and such is the Holy Ghost.

The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate: and the Holy Ghost uncreate.

The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible: and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible.

The Father eternal, the Son eternal: and the Holy Ghost eternal.

And yet they are not three eternal: but one eternal.

As also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated: but one uncreated, and one incomprehensible.

It's a comprehensive statement that the 3 parts of the trinity are one, but a bit of a mouthful if you are trying to make a service interesting and understandable.

Most of the statements of faith that we use will talk about the trinity, God being Father, Son and Holy Spirit and about how Jesus died to save people from their sin, sometimes churches use songs to remind us of these truths rather than a spoken version. But whatever the words the purpose of using a creed or statement of belief is what we heard God say, through Isaiah in our reading - so that we are witnesses to Him.

A witness is someone who says what they believe to be true, what they have seen and heard and understood. Using a creed or statement of belief as part of the service puts into words what Christians believe about God, and while some weeks some of us might have doubts about some parts of our faith, by making a declaration out loud together Christians encourage each other to be witnesses throughout the week to what they believe, to live in the light of that belief and look at their doubts honestly in the light of words that have been used for hundreds of years.